



News Release

For Immediate Release
Tuesday, January 11, 2004
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Know and Recognize Diabetes Warning Signs

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Will I get diabetes? That is a question many Utahns should be asking themselves as they work on their health and fitness resolutions for the new year. Despite many advances in the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes, disease rates have increased dramatically over the past 25 years.

Diabetes is a disease that makes the body unable to properly use insulin. It affects approximately 80,000 diagnosed Utahns and their families, and if not controlled can cause serious health complications such as heart and kidney disease, blindness and nerve damage. “There have been a number of breakthroughs in diabetes research over the past several years, but we still don’t know the exact causes of diabetes in each person,” says Nancy Neff, Program Manager, Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, Utah Department of Health (UDOH). “What we do know is that certain risk factors can increase your chance for diabetes, such as being overweight, physically inactive, age 45 or older or having a family history of diabetes.”

Other risk factors include being of certain ethnic groups, having gestational diabetes, or having a baby weighing more than nine pounds at birth. The UDOH recommends that people with one or more risk factors get regular physical activity, maintain a healthy weight, and be tested for diabetes at least once every three years if over the age of 45. These things may help reduce the likelihood of getting diabetes.

But not all people diagnosed with diabetes have risk factors, or mistakenly think as long as they eat right and exercise they won’t get it, as UDOH employee Edwin Espinel recently discovered. Espinel was diagnosed with diabetes less than six months ago.

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Despite having a family history of diabetes and being Hispanic, both high risk factors, Espinel was only 40 years old, exercised regularly and was at his ideal body weight.

“Up until the moment I was diagnosed, I thought I was fine, that I was too young and healthy to be getting diabetes,” said Espinel. “Luckily, while I was teaching a class, I borrowed one of my students’ blood sugar meters and my number came up as 500. My student asked me if I felt OK. I had thought I felt fine.”

The UDOH also recommends that anyone with a fasting blood sugar of 126 or above see their doctor. After getting his blood sugar back under control, Espinel began to recognize the symptoms of diabetes he had been having.

“I was thirsty all the time, and was getting up frequently to use the bathroom in the middle of the night. But I thought it was because I was exercising more,” said Espinel. “Once I started taking my medication and changing my diet, I began to have more energy and realized that my tiredness, blurry vision and thirst had been my body trying to tell me something was wrong.”

Espinel was like many Utahns with diabetes who don’t recognize the mild warning signs of diabetes. These are feeling tired most of the time, excessive thirst, frequent urination, blurry vision, tingling or numbness in the hands or feet, sores slow to heal and dry skin.

If you have questions about diabetes risk factors and symptoms, talk to your doctor. For a diabetes information packet, call the UDOH Resource Line toll-free at 1-888-222-2542, or visit www.health.utah.gov/diabetes.

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